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no



I promise this is literature if you squint and plug your nose

by nate donato

1: in her youth and tiger years

When they first they met they didn't sleep for three days; neither could bear to take their eyes off the other for such a long time as though they might vanish like a dream. He felt his whole life before had been building up to this moment, no, this constant new existence revealed slowly to the both of them as they grew naturally closer. They felt just as they had been best friends for years, but hadn't know it until now. They dug a hole big on the beach the first day, deep enough for a group of five friends to fit inside, under a bed sheet, eating french fries and smoking weed and talking about the pure satisfaction of pushing in a vhs tape.

First went their shoes. At the bonfire that night she told him to feel the sand between his toes, and he did, and it felt cool and refreshing and clung to his skin like a blanket. He said he used to never wear shoes as a kid and hated the way they made his feet feel. She confessed her picky preference in sock seams. They agreed their life would be enhanced without either, and stopped bothering to wear them. Concrete, sand, grass, carpet, tar pits... for the next few days they felt the world without rubber sole inhibition. Streets felt rough and alive on bare skin at night.

Next went cell phone batteries. Though initially set back they soon both found themselves uninhibited rather than confined by a lack of communication. Neither of them had a desire to go home, and couldn't be reminded by family of obligations. No unbidden thought intruded in the form of telephone call or facebook status. Finally went their money; neither having prepared for such an adventure had much cash at hand and having scraped together their final quarters for a busride they resolved to walk and rely on friends. Careless became carefree.

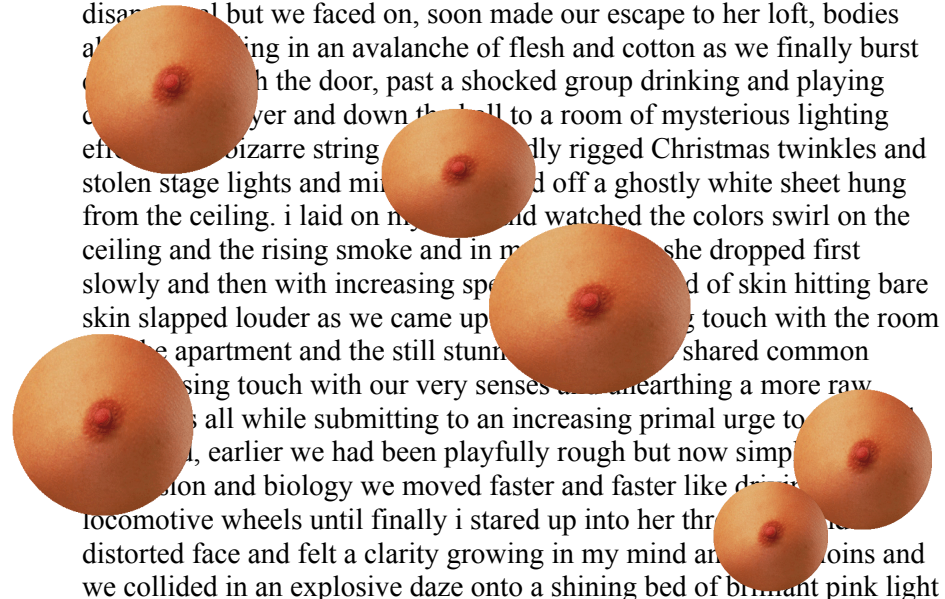
On the morning of the third day they could stay awake no longer. They fell asleep in a friend's truck bed without bothering to ask permission, and woke up as he pulled on the highway.

It was cold, and they pulled together for warmth. He asked her about her dreams. In hers she kissed him, in a beautiful crystal castle underwater. She told it to him without saying anything using just her eyes. She kissed him for real on the highway. He headed home the next month, but felt it wasn't where he belonged.

6: whoops



she read from moby dick and monty python. i read two sex stories, everyone liked the rauchy first one but the second one was a depraved bait and switch from graphic and sexy to graphic and disturbing. i picked it because I got a kick out of the shock twist, the unfortunate uncomfortable face of disgust while trapped biologically in a state of misinformed arousal. she didn't flinch. i grinned. we left early together and I could feel the eyes of the audience drift away from the poor English student vapidly reading his miscarriage of a poem on stage and follow us as we made our dramatic exit with a mix of hunger and disarray but we faced on, soon made our escape to her loft, bodies all crashing in an avalanche of flesh and cotton as we finally burst through the door, past a shocked group drinking and playing cards on the floor and down the hall to a room of mysterious lighting effects, a bizarre string of colorfully rigged Christmas twinkles and stolen stage lights and amidst a ghostly white sheet hung from the ceiling. i laid on my back and watched the colors swirl on the ceiling and the rising smoke and in my mind she dropped first slowly and then with increasing speed and the sound of skin hitting bare skin slapped louder as we came upon the floor. i shared common ground with the apartment and the still stunned audience. i shared common ground with our very senses and unearthed a more raw and primal connection all while submitting to an increasing primal urge to touch her. earlier we had been playfully rough but now simply by the laws of physics and biology we moved faster and faster like locomotive wheels until finally i stared up into her throbbing, distorted face and felt a clarity growing in my mind and our loins and we collided in an explosive daze onto a shining bed of brilliant pink light



5: the same story, again

I know that I hurt you but I also know that I love you and that you're the closest anyone's ever been to me and I'm losing my mind right now and I could really use my best friend. Do you remember when we first met? Everything seemed so perfect. Like I was seeing the world for the first time as it really was; whether it was beautiful or shocking or repetitive or weirdly squishy, it was so much more vivid and meaningful than it had been. I watched the cycles of the moon waiting for you.

But we both know things have been changing. Is it me, or the time around me, that makes everything feel so stretched out? I'm phasing in and out; I'm not sure what's real or if any of us ever were. I started taking pills, I stopped taking pills, I stopped smoking weed, I started smoking weed and taking pills and going to Tai Chi class twice a week... but I can't find any alignment without you. I can't get back on our level. Together we are more than the sum of our parts, but alone I'm not a light. I can't escape the dark. You shine through for moments, but...

Sometimes I get lost, trying to escape with alcohol or something, but I've grown so much I don't do that anymore... Please forgive me, say you'll marry me, say we'll work out?

I can't do it without you.

Anyone can escape the dark, Pudge. You weren't dark when I met you, of course I remember. You were a pale milky white, and I kissed you and held you against me like a babe. I know you want to be with me again, but you can't rely on me. It comes from inside. I wish I could show you. I had to learn the same way. I had to lose something. You're right... in some ways, I feel I only truly know you and nobody else. I know you didn't grow up like the rest of us, and you probably weren't like anyone else to begin with. You're beautiful and different and I love you for it, but it can also get in your way and come between us and I don't know what to do about it. Please, learn to take care of yourself. I can't do it for you. But if you can do most of it, I can help. Our love became bittersweet for me some time ago. I don't think I'll ever care for anyone as much as you, so I've never moved on, but you also can be too much and I wonder if I could handle having only you....

2: moses and the burning bush

Last night
in my dreams
we were impossibly
combined
like a featureless ball
you filled up my body
I planted my seeds
in your mind
I wish we could again

*Can we?
A sphere is the most perfect shape.
I got to kiss you in my dream too;*

*You were perfect.
Then I woke up.*

*I wanted you to know
If you were still
Perfect,
Walk your arches,
And taste all your lips-*

*I rested gently
on your spherical flesh before;*

*You raised me up then
like an ant
on a balloon.*

can we?
take a photo-
it'll last longer
lets lay on the carpet
and look up
i want
to feel human again
i wish i could trust you
why didn't you wait?
i cared so pure before
kissed your baby lips

3: it was a blessing, and a curse

Pudge sat on the couch with the rest. He was acutely aware of the fact that he was not only in a room, but also within a universe. He couldn't sit still. There was a clock on the wall. There was a cheesy painting on the wall. There was a thermostat on the wall. There was a switch on the wall. There was a television on a table.

Idle conversation bounced in circles around him, but he hardly said anything in return. Truth be told he hardly heard it either; weather and gossip seemed interchangeable from any other day. He checked his phone, but she hadn't called him back. He missed life with her. The occasional work permitting visit wasn't enough.

The television played an interview with the latest pop-spiritual:

Q: When did you first recognize you had this unique gift?

A: *From an early age I've been able to see the vibrations in our universe... I thought we could all see them. Learning to use them was the hard part, after all we're all just vibrations ourselves; some of us think we're manipulating them using our brain but really those are just more chemical reactions, more vibrations in the dust. You have to escape yourself completely."*

Q: To build off that you famously claim to have not eaten a single meal for over two years... how can anyone possibly have survived such an extraordinary feat?

A: *Nothing is real. We're all already dead. Many claim that I'm special somehow but I promise you that can see it for yourselves, in the spaces when you're almost asleep but not quite awake, or in the morning when you're awake but not quite conscious yet, or before you're born when-*

Pudge muttered something unintelligible, and abruptly went outside. Something about the program had rubbed him wrong. He watched a truck make a delivery, and slowly back out down the street. It made a beeping sound as it went.

Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep.

He looked up from the street at the sky and found it infinitely more satisfying. Since they met nothing could ever feel the same again.

4: the song he wrote that was too thinly veiled a metaphor

One afternoon
my gaze wandered
and my hand slipped

lost my balloon
but I'm going after it
in a space ship

gameboy nav system
and a fishbowl helmet

it's a gamble
if i'll ever make
it back from orbit

but i'd die than never know
if I could have flown

everything was working!
I couldn't believe the view

I navigated
the asteroid belt
searching space for you

xx

but on Venus
I found my balloon
...ripped in two

i never thought
that i would become
the one to break you

xxx

is it too late?
i don't know

we could try
with a roll of tape
and some glue